THE IRON TRADE.

The usual monthly meeting of Scottish ironmasters was held at Glasgow a fortnight ago, when the price of pig-iron was nominally fixed at 5*l.* 10s. per ton. This is an advance of 1*l.* 5s. since the previous meeting, and exactly double the price at which iron was selling in the beginning of December. Although this price was named as the rate under which none would sell, transactions took place as high as 6*l.* per ton; and, notwithstanding this advanced price, buyers were more numerous and more urgent than sellers. An impression generally prevailed that prices would rise still higher when the present contracts of the ironmasters were completed. For bars the maker's price is 10*l.*, but sales have been made at 9*l.* 10s. cash. Superior bars realize 11*l.* 10s. At these prices customers were supplied, and considerable business transacted during the week. Boiler-plates are quoted at 13*l.* 10s. At Manchester there has been a pause in the demand for iron, and purchases have been made here and there at a reduction of 5s. per ton. At a meeting of the principal firms in the South Staffordshire iron trade, held at the Swan Hotel, Wolverhampton, on Thursday, the 27th ult., it was agreed that an advance of 40s. per ton in the price of manufactured iron should take place next quarter-day, the orders at present in hand, as well as those anticipated, fully justifying this important step. The price of bar and rod iron, it is expected, will be then 12*l.* per ton; hoop iron, 13*l.*; sheet iron, for shingles, 14*l.*; and pigs, 6*l.* 10s. to 7*l.* In consequence of the sudden and great rise in the price of iron, much inconvenience is felt by the manufacturers and workmen engaged in making bedscrews, latches, &c., particularly in the district of Wednesbury. The quantity of iron required is very great, and cannot be procured; neither can the numerous orders daily arriving be executed at the recent prices. The small masters are therefore comparatively idle amidst abundance of work, and have as yet derived no benefit from the great improvement in the trade.

In the course of the past month an advance of 1*l.* per ton has taken place in Welch iron; and although the existing prices are considerably higher than they have been for some years, yet so general is the opinion of their being maintained, and also that further advances may probably soon occur, that orders, both from abroad, and for home use, are making their appearance somewhat freely. It is with the greatest difficulty the makers are persuaded to take further orders at any price, in fact, some of the largest firms have closed their order books; 12*l.* 17s. 6d. per ton has been refused for rails, and 7*l.* is the price for pigs. During the past week it is well known that one party effected the purchase of 1,000 tons of common bar-iron for delivery in June next, at 10*l.* per ton. The *Liverpool Times* states that a contract was entered into in that town on Saturday last for 21,000 tons of rails, at the price of 12*l.* a ton, to be delivered at the rate of 1,000 tons monthly, beginning in October. The broker's commission to the transaction amounted to 2,400*l.* The purchase was made by a Glasgow house.

The rails and chairs for the Newcastle and Berwick Railway, amounting to 27,000 tons, have been contracted for at 12*l.* per ton the former, and 7*l.* the latter.

London Mechanics' Institution.—We regret to find that this, the oldest popular institution for the dissemination of knowledge, is less flourishing than it deserves to be. A meeting will be held next month to consider how to render more effectual the system of popular education there established, and we hope it will be attended by those who appreciate the advantages conferred on society by such associations. The first number of a new periodical called *The Literary and Scientific Journal*, conducted by members of this institution, has just been published, and is very creditable to those engaged in it.

Burial in Towns.—We are glad to see that the House of Commons has come to the resolution that the practice of interment in large cities is injurious to the health of the population, and demands the serious attention of Parliament. This is one step forward at all events.

SANATORY REGULATIONS.

A few nights since in the House of Commons, Mr. Hume asked when the Government proposed to bring in their measure with respect to the health of towns, and called the attention of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the necessity of taking precautions in connection with that measure to insure an adequate supply of water.

Sir James Graham said that he could not then undertake to fix any time for the introduction of the measure. With reference to the supply of water, a clause was introduced into all private bills brought before Parliament for that object, making them dependent on any general measures which might be hereafter introduced with respect to the health of towns.

The same subject occupied the attention of the House of Lords on Monday evening last. The Marquis of Normandy, on presenting a petition from the mayor, aldermen, and citizens of Limerick, complaining of the sanatory state of that city, made inquiries as to the time when the promised measure would be introduced, and the extension of its provisions to Ireland. He was aware that the subject was difficult in the arrangement of its details, and he did not wish to cause any unnecessary hurry, but the noble lord was aware that he was connected with an association for improving the sanatory state of towns, and he was daily receiving letters, inquiring when the measure, which had for some cause or other been so long delayed, would be presented. He would ask, therefore, whether it was intended to extend the provisions of the contemplated measure to the sister country, and also whether the Government would shortly introduce a bill on this subject into the other House of Parliament?

The Duke of Buccleuch, in answer to the questions put to him, said that he could not exactly state the period when the measure would be proposed; but he hoped it would be introduced before any great length of time elapsed. Since the receipt of the report of the Commissioners to Inquire into the Health of Towns, no time had been lost in preparing the measure; but it required a great deal of research and care, for it involved the examination of 400 Acts of Parliament, relating to different towns and districts. He trusted, that no very distant period the bill would be laid before the other House, allowing not only sufficient time, but ample consideration in both Houses. With regard to extending the provisions to the sister kingdom of Ireland, he saw no reason why the provisions should not be extended to Scotland and Ireland; and on the further consideration of the measure he hoped that nothing would occur to prevent that extension.

The Marquis of Normandy said, that nothing could be more satisfactory than the answer given by the noble duke.

SMOKE PROHIBITION BILL.

On the second reading of this bill, which took place last week, the Earl of Lincoln said that the most convenient course would be to postpone the bill till the Government measure for the sanatory regulation of large towns should be before the house. He was not, however, disposed to resist the second reading, knowing that it was the intention of the hon. mover (Mr. Mackinnon) to send the bill to a committee upstairs. He trusted that hon. members opposite would not throw any unfair impediment in the way of legislation on this subject. Lord John Russell thought the bill ought to be postponed till the Government measure was before the House. He would rather see the subject in the hands of the noble lord at the head of the Woods and Forests, who could command the assistance of those best able to advise.

Mr. Brotherton was in favour of referring the bill to a select committee.

Sir R. Peel hoped the House would adopt the suggestion of the hon. gentleman who had last spoken. He represented a district of the country that was deeply interested in the question, and there was no hon. gentleman in that House better qualified to pronounce an opinion upon the subject. He thought it would be very desirable to have the whole of the plan of his noble friend before the House, before they proceeded to legislate upon one branch of these nuisances. The time that would be spent by a committee upstairs deliberating upon and maturing the measure, would, in his opinion, be well employed in bringing the scheme to maturity. He thought his hon. friend (Mr. Mackinnon) deserved the thanks of the House for the great trouble he had taken in the matter. The services of the hon. member were perfectly gratuitous, and he thought he was entitled to the grateful acknowledgments of the House. He believed it was generally understood that the bill of the hon. member would not be proceeded with until the general measure of his noble friend was before the House.

Mr. Mackinnon replied. He had been appointed chairman of a committee that sat two years ago upon the subject, and they had reported that the smoke nuisance ought to be abated, and that the Government ought to bring in a bill for that purpose, and if not that the chairman should undertake it. He did not see any objection to the committee being appointed to take evidence on the subject, and if the noble lord would incorporate the provisions of his bill in the Government measure he (Mr. Mackinnon) would have no objection to abandon his bill altogether.

The bill was then read a second time and ordered to be referred to a select committee.

PROTECTION OF WORKS OF ART IN MUSEUMS.

On reading the order of the day for going into committee on this bill a few days ago, Sir J. Graham said, he wished to go into committee *pro forma* merely. He did not think it right that the operation of the bill should be confined to works of art in any particular locality, and he had therefore considered that it would be desirable to extend the provisions of the bill as it stood at present, and he was about to move an instruction to the committee to effect that object. There were many valuable works of art to which the bill as at present limited would give no protection. For instance, the statue of the Duke of Wellington, near the Mansion-house, ought to be brought within the protection of the law. His noble friend (Lord F. Egerton) had most liberally thrown open to the public his valuable and extensive collection of paintings and works of art, and it would be monstrous that any mischief should be done by means of a breach of his noble friend's hospitality without the possibility of due punishment reaching the offender. The painted window of St. Margaret's Church might be broken by a stone thrown at it, and as the words of the bill stood they would not reach such an offence. He therefore wished to give the measure a more extensive operation, and he begged to move that it be an instruction to the committee that they have power to extend the bill to all works of art, wherever situate; and, if the house agreed to that instruction, he proposed to go into committee *pro formâ*, so that the provisions of the bill might be made co-extensive with the mischief.

The instruction having been put,

Mr. Bouverie said he quite agreed with the right hon. baronet so far as he went; he only doubted whether it would not be better to have a criminal as well as a civil remedy, giving the option of adopting either mode, according to circumstances.

The instruction was then agreed to, and the bill went through committee *pro formâ*, and was reported to the house, with amendments, and ordered to be printed and recommitted on Monday.

Thames Embankment.—At a Court of Common Council held last week, Mr. Deputy Bedford presented a report from the Thames Navigation Committee on the subject of a letter received from the Earl of Lincoln, as Chairman of the Commissioners of Metropolitan Improvements, with a plan for the embankment of the Thames from Chelsea to Vauxhall. The report recommended a copy to be addressed to his lordship, expressing the concurrence to a certain extent of the plan. On the motion of Mr. Ashurst an addition to the effect of reserving to the Corporation of London in any measure introduced into Parliament their right to the bed and soil of the river was agreed to.

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